

# THE LIE

*a novel*



C. L. TAYLOR

*“Claustrophobic, tense...a thrill-ride  
of a novel that keeps you guessing.”*

—ELIZABETH HAYNES, AUTHOR OF *INTO THE DARKEST CORNER*

# READING GROUP GUIDE

1. One of the themes of the book is whether your past defines your future. At the end of the book, Emma says that it doesn't if you surround yourself with people who love and care for you. Do you agree?
2. What did you think of the character Al? Was she sympathetic or unsympathetic?
3. Emma tries to rescue Leanne from the fire. Would you have done the same?
4. After Emma has told Will about who she really is, she tells him she'd rather he still called her Jane. Why do you think she did that?
5. At what point in the story do you think Daisy's death could have been prevented?
6. When Emma reads Leanne's emails, she finds out that Leanne thinks she's a pessimistic person who uses what happened to her in the past for her own gain. Do you agree with this?

7. How do you think Emma changes over the course of the book (both as Emma and as Jane)?
8. What did you think of the ending? Should it have ended differently?
9. The book explores female friendships and the fact that some friendships have undercurrents of jealousy, competitiveness, and resentment running through them. Is this true of any of your friendships?
10. What other similar books would you recommend to people who enjoyed *The Lie*?

# A CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR

What inspired you to write *The Lie*?

I wrote *The Lie* because I've always been fascinated by the nature of female friendships, in particular the dynamics of close-knit groups of friends. Most of the time, female friendships are healthy and supportive—you literally trust them “with your life”—but sometimes they're not. Sometimes they're much more toxic than they appear, with possessiveness, resentment, bitterness, competitiveness, and envy lurking under the surface.

I wanted to write a story about a group of women who appear to get along well but whose friendship is riddled with issues that none of them are willing to confront. I was curious as to what would happen if I put those friends in a dangerous, crucible-type situation where they're forced to trust one another to survive. Would they support or turn on one another instead?

Did you include any of your own real life experiences in the novel?

Like the women in the novel, I went to Nepal on a vacation of a lifetime. Unlike Emma and her friends, I had the most amazing

time, and, if anything, stronger bonds were formed among my friendship circle as a result of our experience.

But I have also experienced friendships that weren't healthy—friends who were effervescent, generous, spontaneous, and fun, but also unpredictable, competitive, possessive, and argumentative. When someone like that is at the center of your friendship group, they can get away with antisocial behavior, because everyone is aware that if they call them on it, they'll be frozen out. That can make for a lot of tension, isolation, and mistrust—sensations I hope my readers experience when they read *The Lie*.

**Your characters are so authentic. As a writer, how do you get into their psyches?**

My characters are an amalgamation of me, people I've known, people I've observed, and my imagination. I always make sure I know what each character desires—something they want more than anything else in the world—and also what they fear most. I also look to their childhoods to discover how their pasts have shaped them into the people they are now. As well as obvious things like the way they look and the things they wear, I also spend a lot of time thinking about my characters' mannerisms, the way they hold themselves, the way they walk, and the way they speak. Sometimes I know everything about a character before I start to write the novel; sometimes it's not until I've written the first draft that I've fully gotten to know them.

**Why did you decide that Emma should work in an animal shelter?**

Emma always wanted to be a vet, and after her experience at Ekanta Yatra, I felt it made sense to give her a new start that was centered on animals rather than people. Even though she's still quite isolated socially (she still doesn't trust people enough to let them get close), I wanted to make her content so that when the

letters and messages start arriving, she's got a lot to lose. I also liked the similarity between Emma and the animals she cares for. Like Jack, she's been hurt and mistreated and needs patience and gentleness to teach her to trust and love again.

**Did you know the ending when you started writing the book?**

Actually, it changed several times. Originally, Daisy was going to fall off the cliff by accident, and Al was going to die of an asthma attack (or die in the car after Leanne had attacked her), but I felt it would be too bleak to completely destroy Emma's friendship group. I needed there to be one friendship that survived, one person who Emma could trust, despite everything. I don't imagine that Emma and Al will remain close for the rest of their lives. I think they've both been through so much that spending time together will bring back bad memories, but they'll both move on to happier times, and in part, they have their trust in each other to thank for that.

***The Lie* has so many unexpected twists and turns. Do you sometimes even surprise yourself when you are writing?**

Absolutely! When I was writing the first draft, I had a pretty good idea what was going to happen, but new twists occurred to me as I was writing it. That sometimes meant I had to veer off in a completely different direction from the one I was planning, but that's one of the magical things about writing: the way your mind can surprise you. It keeps you entertained as a writer, and hopefully, it means some unpredictable twists for the reader too.